

### The Return of the Parthenon Marbles.

The possible restitution of the Parthenon Marbles is still a current issue in cultural politics, and an issue whose resolution may have consequences for the problem of the restitution of cultural property in general.

The reality of the problem has become increasingly obvious and it recently (12th October) culminated in the formal Greek demand for the Parthenon Marbles.

Changes can be detected within the attitudes of the public, politicians, and academics, as reflected in the frequent coverage of the issue in newspapers and on television, and radio. Much of this is due to the thorough research and extensive lobbying of 'The British Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles'. The work of this committee, which includes the publication of a booklet, a survey among members of Parliament, representation at international conferences on the problem of restitution and extensive press coverage of their activities, is in itself a unique and impressive example of the power and potential of 'grassroots' activities which should be a challenge for us all.

At the recent ICCM conference (International Council of Museums) a resolution was passed on the return of cultural property to its country of origin. No example was

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Within the last few years British archaeology has experienced several drastic organisational changes and seen new rules and principles introduced. Many of these will profoundly change the environment of work as well as influence the internal structure of

mentioned, but the Parthenon Marbles most certainly must have been in everyone's mind. Among nearly 1000 voting delegates there were no votes against the resolution and only 10 abstentions (half of which constituted the five-member British delegation). In comparison with the 1982 UNESCO conference, where 52 countries were in favour of the return of the Marbles compared to 26 abstentions and 11 against, this seems to signal a significant change in international attitudes towards the problem of restitution. Delegates from West Germany, Holland and Denmark, countries which in 1982 voted against the return of the Parthenon Marbles, now positively support the return of the Marbles (ref. The British Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles).

Against this background it will be very interesting to see the degree and manner to which changes expressed in these international councils will be reflected in the real world of policy making. The formal demand for the Marbles has turned the issue into a political question, where the decision made might set a norm for future actions, will the politicians accept that cultural objects, however old or exotic, can have political and symbolic value of contemporary importance, as international cultural councils have suggested should be the case? And, will archaeologists recognise and accept this as well?

the discipline. The forthcoming creation of a new Commission for Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings, the Cunliffe report and similar official reshuffling of the organisational structures are among the most obvious instances; but other aspects such as volun-

teers, the MSC-programmes, unionisation, the 'Institute of Field Archaeologists' etc., might also cause considerable and potentially unwanted consequences for archaeology. Many of these consequences have not been thoroughly discussed, and their importance for the future job situation -- with respect both

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### The Interpretation of the Archaeological Heritage.

As issue 2:1 of *ARC* showed, archaeologists are becoming increasingly aware of the need both to serve the public adequately and to be accountable to it.

However, there is, as often, a great disjunction between what is said and what is done. Archaeologists rarely consider what will happen to the products of their work -- material and natural remains, site plans, photographs, etc. -- after they have been used to produce a report and safely housed in an archive. The task of curating this archive is then often left to museum workers, who, partly through lack of funds, are rarely able to present the results of archaeological research in a way that is interesting to anyone other than a committed student of archaeology.

I feel that if archaeologists want to serve the public and not just themselves, then the results of archaeological research must be communicated in intelligible fashion to as wide a number of people as possible. The large numbers of people in treasure-hunting clubs, interested in genealogy, local history, and 'heritage' programmes on television show how much enthusiasm there is for the past. Archaeologists can channel this interest by writing not just for their academic peers, but also for someone with only a passing interest in archaeology; by using amateurs in

to availability and nature of work -- makes them very important for generations of unestablished archaeologists. It seems essential to discuss these aspects of our subject, and *ARC* welcomes comments and letters concerning these issues.

their research; by giving guides and lectures, by publishing popular accounts of their work; and by giving advice on the way evidence should be presented via all the audio and visual media.

The funds are available to do this sort of work. The financial magnates in the City have been persuaded recently to invest in tourism, and Government grants totalling £35 million a year are available for the tourism and leisure industry. One place where novel interpretation methods have been used -- the Viking Jorvik Centre in York -- received the maximum grant for such a heritage project from the English Tourist Board.

It is easy to sneer at such attempts at popularisation and to retire into academic pedantry. A more productive approach would be for archaeologists, whether in museums, field units or research establishments, to join forces with those experienced in tourism, interpretation and mass communication in order to present a past which is widely intelligible. These popularisations do not have to take the form of traditional 'histories' of particular periods or peoples; issues of current debate can also be communicated to a wider audience. 'The archaeology of mind' is potentially of just as great (if not more) interest to the public as the archaeology of Roman Britain. What is required is the ability to express complex ideas in a clear way -- something at which archae-